DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 458 CE 072 599

AUTHOR	Edwards, Hazel
TITLE	Workdays. A Day in the Life of...a Fruiterer and Truck Driver.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-875759-09-3
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	29p.; For related documents, see CE 072 594-603.
AVAILABLE FROM	Draw Publications, P.O. Box 643, Kew, Victoria 3101, Australia ($7 plus $3.50 postage and handling).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult Reading Programs; *Career Education; Career Exploration; Entrepreneurship; Foreign Countries; High Interest Low Vocabulary Books; *Literacy Education; *Occupational Information; *Quality of Working Life; Reading Instruction; Small Businesses
IDENTIFIERS	Australia; *Heavy Equipment Operators; *Truck Drivers

ABSTRACT

One of a series of work-based interviews about occupations in Australia, this booklet presents a personal interview with a man who has had a fruit shop and then his own heavy equipment earth-moving business. The following questions are answered: what the fruiterer and heavy-equipment operator does, why the person chose the field of employment, how the person found out about the job, what he does and doesn't like about it, what kind of training was needed, what the fruiterer and heavy-equipment operator does during a working week, and the hours. Cartoons are used to enliven the material, and glossaries listing 9 words for the fruiterer occupation and 12 words for the heavy-equipment operator are included. Although designed to be used in literacy classes with adult new readers, the booklets are also appropriate for use with elementary and secondary students in career exploration and career education. (KC)

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Workdays

a day in the life of ....

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a Fruiterer and Truck Driver

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Workdays

a day in the life of ....

a Fruiterer and Truck Driver

Name Ross Ploughman

Aged 29

Workdays
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a Fruiterer and Truck Driver

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Draw Publications
P.O. Box 643 Kew Victoria 3101
AUSTRALIA

ISBN 1 875759 09 3

Illustrations by Will Goodwin
Design and layout by Draw Publications
Printed by Surrey Printing
Published and distributed by Draw Publications

WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS IS ROSS IN?

Ross is self employed as a fruiterer. He has his own small shop in an eastern suburb of Melbourne.

WHAT IS THE LOCATION LIKE?

The shop is on a busy road with about nine other shops. It is called a shopping strip.

ARE THERE SPECIAL PROBLEMS WITH A BUSINESS IN THE AREA?

Parking is sometimes a problem for his customers. Luckily, there are several schools and factories in the area. These bring people to the shops most days.

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE AND WHY?

Older people often walk to the local shops. So do young mothers with children. They like the service at small shops.

WHY CHOOSE THIS WORK?

Ross bought the business when he was in his early twenties. He's a hard worker and enjoys being his own boss.

WHAT WOULD ROSS DO IN A TYPICAL WEEK?

He works six days a week. And his day starts very early. Lots of different skills are needed to run the shop. He has to drive the fruit and vegetable truck. He goes to the market early in the morning. Loading and unloading is heavy work.

WHAT KIND OF SKILLS DOES ROSS NEED?

He needs to know how to pick the best quality fruit and vegetables.

WHAT DOES HE DO IN THE SHOP?

In the shop, he sets out the fruit and vegetables. He serves customers and has to be good at talking to people.

HAS A GOOD CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP HELPED THE BUSINESS?

Ross is popular with his customers and has built up the business.

WHAT KIND OF SERVICE DOES ROSS OFFER?

It's hard for a small shop to compete with the big supermarkets, so Ross pays special attention to his customers.

IN WHAT WAY?

He makes sure all his food is fresh and will make an effort to get special fruit for a customer.

OK. You say potato, I say potarto.

WHAT ELSE HAS TO BE DONE IN THE BUSINESS?

He does his books and has to keep good records of where the money comes from and where it goes.

HOW CAN ROSS WORK SUCH LONG HOURS?

Luckily, lifting at work keeps him fit. He doesn't have time to play sport or go out much. The business is more than a fulltime job.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A WORKING DAY?

3.45am	The alarm rings. Ross gets out of bed.
4.10am	The truck starts, first time.
4.30am	The road is quiet. There is only a newspaper van, a police car and other fruiterers heading for the market.
4.40am	This is Footscray Road. This is the Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market. The trucks queue outside the market. The security guard checks Ross's parking permit. He also looks at his *identification*. It is still dark.
4.45am	Quickly, Ross parks in his usual lane. 400-500 trucks are parked in the market. Growers travel from the country during the night. Others are agents. They sell fruit or vegetables.

Some are fruiterers like Ross. He buys for his own small shop. Others buy for the big supermarket chains. Ross wears a heavy, leather apron. This protects his clothes. On the inside apron pocket, he carries his money. At the market, everybody pays cash.

4.50am — Inside, Ross checks the *'greens'* first. He orders, 'two *decks* of *cauhes*'. At another stall, he orders lettuce, boxes of celery and bunches of silver beet. He checks the *quality* carefully. These will be paid for and collected after 5am. That's when the market starts *officially*.

4.55am — Ross jumps out of the way. Fork-lift drivers move fast. They move the heavy loads out to the trucks.

5.00am — The siren goes. The lights come on. Buyers bargain. Then they pay for their fruit

and vegetables. Trolleys are piled high with boxes. It is noisy. Scooters nip between the trolleys. Fork-lift drivers zip in and out.

5.15am — Ross loads his trolley for the first time. Thursday is his heaviest morning of the week.

5.30am — The flowers smell beautiful. Ross buys some daffodils. Sometimes he buys a bunch of roses for his mother.

5.45am — The second trolley load has been taken to the truck. These are onions, tomatoes and apples.

6.00am — Unusual fruits are bought 'for a change'. Ross buys some tamarillos. 'These are halfway between an orange and a mandarin'.

6.30am — Time for a quick *cappuccino* at the market cafe. Thick steak and onion sandwiches are eaten

by truck drivers. They have driven a long way. Ross returns his trolley to the bay.

7.00am — Ross leaves with a loaded truck. Once his truck broke down on busy Swan Street. A *prime mover* was used to tow him. Luckily the vegetables didn't fall off!

7.35am — Time for a quick shave and breakfast. Then Ross unloads his stock at the shop.

8.15am — Some cabbages go into the cool room. Bananas and oranges go on display. The shop is open.

8.45am — 'Is it fresh?' asks a customer, poking at a lettuce. 'Straight from the market this morning', says Ross.

9.00am — The school canteen is pleased with the crisp red apples.

1.00pm	Ross fixes his stock. He serves the customers. He has a sandwich for lunch.
6.00pm	He pulls down the big roller door. This closes 'The Fruit Shop'.
6.30pm	At home, he counts the money. He does his books. Then he has dinner.
8.30pm	Ross falls asleep in the chair. Then he wakes up. He sets his alarm for 3.45am. Then he goes to bed. Sunday is the only morning he can sleep in!

For the holidays, I'm takin' the family on a trip to the Big Banana!

GLOSSARY

identification	*official card or paper which says who the person is*
greens	*Australian slang jargon for green leaf vegetables*
decks	*layers, tiers*
caulies	*Australian slang jargon for cauliflower, a vegetable*
quality	*goodness and freshness*
officially	*correct or proper time*
cappuccino froth	*white coffee with milk*
prime mover	*a large truck used to tow trailer and vehicles*

WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR OCCUPATION?

The long hours. I used to start at quarter to four in the morning and get home at six at night. There was no time for anything outside the shop.

WAS THERE A SPECIAL REASON TO CHANGE?

My fiancee, Susan returned from overseas. I didn't want to start a marriage with such early working hours.

WOULD YOU HAVE ENLARGED 'THE FRUIT SHOP' BUSINESS?

Although I'd built up a well run business, I couldn't see much more *potential*.

WHAT DID YOU DO?

I did go for a few job interviews.

WHAT OTHER JOBS DID YOU TRY?

I sold fire extinguishers. I was offered a job as an insurance agent.

WHAT OTHER KIND OF WORK DID YOU LOOK AT?

Meanwhile we looked at some earthmoving equipment. I offered him (the previous owner) a ridiculous price and he accepted it.

WHY DID YOU TRY EARTHMOVING EQUIPMENT?

I like being outside. I have an *affinity* with machinery. It's really pushing dirt around all day...but it's very expensive equipment.

DID SUSAN HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

Susan did ask me if I'd find it mentally *stimulating* enough.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Basically it's about moving dirt from one place to another.

IS THE DIRT MOVED FOR A REASON?

I dig out foundations for houses. I tap into sewers. On a new house, I do a site clean. I do landscaping work. I drill stump holes.

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL WEEK AS A SELF EMPLOYED EARTHMOVING OPERATOR.

Monday I drilled some stump holes.

Tuesday I didn't work because it rained.

Wednesday I removed soil from land excavated for foundations.

Thursday I removed more dirt from another block of land.

DO YOU WORK A LONG WAY FROM HOME?

Usually I work within a hundred kilometre *radius*.

WHAT KIND OF EARTHMOVING MACHINERY DID YOU BUY?

My first machine and truck were out of Dad's Army.

IS IT STILL THE SAME MACHINERY?

Now I have good machinery....but I like to spend money to make it functional, make it look pretty and make a dollar out of it.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN - MAKE IT LOOK PRETTY?

Presentation matters to me. I like to have everything looking spick and span. I'll spend money on keeping my equipment

looking good. It's not the money. All my equipment is very expensive to replace.

WHAT KIND OF MACHINERY DO YOU HAVE NOW?

'*The outfit*' weighs just under 11 ton. There's a tip truck or tipper. The bob cat weighs two and a quarter ton. This has four wheel drive *traction*. On the trailer is a back hoe attachment and a post hole borer attachment.

IS IT DIFFICULT EQUIPMENT TO USE?

I've always been able to operate anything I've sat in.

IS IT EASY TO FIND WORK?

I work for a plant hire agency. Good *reputation* is very important.

HOW DOES THE AGENCY PAY YOU?

They give me work on a commission basis and take 10%. I carry a lot of their customers.

WHAT SORT OF MONEY DO YOU EARN?

My hourly rate is $54 per hour.

WHAT SATISFACTION DOES YOUR WORK OFFER?

It's nice to feel your service is *appreciated* over other people. If you haven't got demand, you haven't got the pressure of keeping yourself going. It's the thrill of the hunt.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST?

Waiting for something to fall off or go boom. Then there's the weather.

WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

I don't like it when it's freezing at 6am in the morning, or boiling in the afternoon heat.

IS IT DEMANDING WORK?

Physically, it's very demanding.

WHY?

You bounce around in a machine all day.

HAVE YOU BEEN OUT OF WORK FOR A LONG PERIOD?

One low spot was when I worked only 19 days in three months. Usually I'm constantly working, if you 'turn the wheels' you're making money.

CAN THERE BE ANY PROBLEMS ON THE SITE?

The type of ground can influence whether the machine gets bogged down (only in the winter months) or can keep going.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO GET THE MACHINE OUT?

A winch truck costs $200 to pull you out if you get bogged.

WHEN ARE YOUR QUIET TIMES?

Winter and Spring can be quiet times.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST?

I like working for myself. I enjoy the long hours, probably because I'm *hyperactive*.

ARE YOU ALWAYS ALONE?

The dog is company. She's the first thing out the door in the morning. Hyperactive dog....we're a bloody good pair. I like working for myself.

Mike
Goodman

GLOSSARY

potential	*able to become or grow*
affinity	*natural liking*
stimulating	*exciting*
excavated	*dug out*
radius	*area*
functional	*operational or performing well*
presentation	*how something looks or appears*
the outfit	*Australian slang jargon for all the excavation equipment*
traction	*gripping pull of a vehicle*
reputation	*opinion of a person*
appreciated	*well pleased*
hyperactive	*always busy*

Hazel Edwards'

Workdays

a day in the life of ...

A collection of simply written, work-based interviews, to give an insight into others' workstyles for beginning adult readers. The subjects were chosen to cover a range of occupations and workplace situations in Australia including the self-employed, franchisee, professional, trade and semi-skilled.

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Author Hazel Edwards' method of researching is by interview and visiting the workplace.

Her previous one hundred books have included adult literacy, scripts, non-fiction, crime and childrens books. Currently she is researching other workplaces for more books in the ' day in a life of ' series.

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